

Serious⁴ Advice
T O
P E R S O N S
Who have been
S I C K,

*To be put into their Hands as
soon as they are Recover'd.*

W I T H
A T H A N K S G I V I N G for Recovery.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,
EDMUND GIBSON, D. D.
Late Lord Bishop of L O N D O N.

The T W E N T Y N I N T H Edition.

L O N D O N :

Printed by E. O W E N in *Warwick-Lane*; and
sold by W. J O H N S T O N at the *Golden
Ball* in St. *Paul's Church-yard*.

M D C C L V. .

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Serious ADVICE to a Person recovered from SICKNESS.

NEIGHBOUR,

SINCE it hath pleased God to recover you from your late Sickness, and to grant you a longer Continuance in the World ; I hope one of the first Things in your Thoughts, is to Reflect upon the Condition you have been in ; which you could not be so well able to do, under the Pains and Disorders of a Sick-bed. And as I doubt not but you are seriously disposed to Consideration, especially after such a Warning of Mortality as you have had ; so I assure myself, that you will esteem it an Act of true Friendship in me, that I offer you my Assistance therein ; having no other Intention in doing it, but to confirm the good Dispositions which the Sight of the Grave hath raised and improved, but which a new Prospect of Life will be

apt. to destroy again, unless they be renewed upon the Mind by serious Consideration on your Part.

I. The first Step then, towards our reaping the Benefits which God designs in visiting us, is to consider Sickness, not so much in the Natural, as the Religious Sense ; not as it takes away our natural Strength and Spirits, and so disables us for the Business of this World ; but as it is a nearer View of Death, and a sensible Proof of the Frailty of our Nature, and thereupon a seasonable Warning to be in a constant Preparation for our End. In like Manner, the Pains and Agonies that we feel in the Time of Sickness, are not to be considered barely as an Uneasiness to the Body, but more especially as a Lesson to the Soul, to make it less fond of continuing in this painful State, and more willing to be removed, whenever it shall please God to call. Nor is the Time of Continuance of Sickness to be reflected on as so much lost from the Business or Pleasures of Life, but rather as a Check that God gives to our worldly Pursuits, in order to make Way for Thoughts and Considerations of a Heavenly Nature.

II. FOR,

II. For, as in all the other Dispensations of Life, so particularly in this of Sickness, you must have your Eye chiefly upon God, or else you will never make a right Judgment nor a right Use of it. If you look no farther than the Body, or to what Cause or Accident the Indisposition was immediately owing, the Effects will reach no farther than the Body; nor will your Sickness work any other Care or Concern in you, than how to remove the Cause, and avoid the Accident for the Time to come. But certainly, as God can do nothing but for wise and good Ends; so when he visits us with Sickness, it cannot be the only or chief End he aims at, to afflict and punish the Body; because this Life is not the proper Season of Punishment for Sin; and to think that God grieves and afflicts his Creatures for no other Reason but because it is in his Power to do it, or because he chooses it, and delights in it, is by no Means consistent with the Divine Goodness. He himself assures us, (*Lam. iii. 3.*) that *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*; and if he sends Sickness unwillingly, this implies that he would not send it at all,

if something in our Condition did not require it, and some Benefits were not to be conveyed to us by it. But now it is certain, that no Temporal Benefits accrue to us by Sickneſs, which is a manifeſt Prejudice to the Body and Eſtate; and therefore the Benefit that God deſigns by it, muſt be of a Spiritual Nature, for the Good of the Soul; and ſo when the Scripture ſpeaks of God's Unwillingneſs to afflict the Body, the Meaning muſt be, that he would not do it, if it were not the ordinary Means of conveying Good to the Soul. And ſince the firſt Foundation of the Good that Sickneſs works, is the Bringing us to a ſerious Conſideration of our future State: This ſhews us, that the Bed of Sickneſs muſt not be forgotten, nor the Thoughts of it laid aſide, as ſoon as we are reſtored to our Bodily Health and Strength. That is rather the proper Time of ſetting ourſelves to think regularly and effectually; when our bodily Pains are removed or abated, and God hath ſet the Terrors of Death at a greater Diſtance from us, and ſo our Minds are at Liberty to reflect with due Attention and Deliberation.

III. When you have conſidered the true
End

End of God's visiting Mankind in general ; go on, and apply this to your own Condition in particular, by satisfying yourself of the Need and Occasion you had to be thus visited by the Hand of God. Do but look back upon your former Life, and you will probably find, that till then you had been supine and lukewarm in Religion, and did want to be awakened out of that Spiritual Sleep, into a Sense of your Duty : That you encouraged yourself in Sin by setting Death and a future State far from you ; and therefore needed to be rouzed from your Security, by a nearer View and Apprehension of them : That you had long forgotten and neglected God, and had need to be thus smitten with his Hand, to bring you to a Sense of his Power and Justice : That Ease and Health had betrayed you into too great a Fondness for the Delights and Interests of this World, and so it was necessary for God to interrupt your Enjoyment, and teach you the Folly of setting your Heart on this World, by reminding you of the Uncertainty of your Continuance in it.

These and the like Reflections upon the Follies and Failings of your former State, will shew you the Goodness and

Mercy of God in visiting you with Sickness: You will see, that there was a great deal of Corruption in your Heart, which could not be discovered and let out, but by putting you to some Pain; and that whatever you have endured, is not to be compared to the Misery you had been in, if a Course of Ease and Health had still gone on to hide that Spiritual Corruption from you. And the Sense of God's Goodness herein, will convince you, that the Stripes you have received were the Chastisements of a tender Father, to whose Hand you therefore listen and submit with all Humility and Thankfulness, saying as *David* did in the like Case, (Psal. cxix. 75,) *I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled; and ver. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.*

IV. When you have duly reflected what the State of your Soul was before the Time of Sickness, and have made yourself sensible of the Goodness of God in sending it; go on and consider seriously, what your Condition would have been if this Sickness had proved your Last; How your Accounts stood with God, and what Preparation you had been

in

in to meet Death ; Whether it would not have found you going on in some known Sin, or indulging yourself overmuch in the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life : Whether you had in any Measure applied yourself to the Study and Practice of God's Laws, and lived in a due Regard to the Holy Ordinances of Prayer, Preaching, and the Blessed Sacrament : In short, consider seriously, whether, before Sickneſs came, you had not thought too little of another Life, and whether Death, if it had then come, would not have been a very great Surprize to you. And if upon this Enquiry into the Frame of your Soul before Sickneſs, you ſee that it had found you in a ſinful or lukewarm, that is, in an unprepared State ; you then know, that if it had not pleaſed God to ſpare you, you had been doomed ere this to irrecoverable Deſtruction. And the Senſe of this ſhould oblige you to employ all the Powers of Body and Soul, in Praiſing and Bleſſing God for his unſpeakable Mercy and Goodneſs, and ſhould alſo be a Warning never to run ſuch a deſperate Hazard again, but to ſet yourſelf ſeriously to think of Death, and not to be at Eaſe in your Mind, till you find you are prepared for

it ; that so (as our Saviour speaks) *when-
ever your Lord comes, you may be sure to
be found watching.*

V. Next to the Divine Goodness, first
in Visiting you with Sickness, and then in
delivering you from Death ; remember
what your own Thoughts and Resolutions
were, while you lay upon your Sick-bed.

Did you not think it great Folly, to
have let so much Time pass away with so
little Preparation for your future State !
Now God hath given you more Time, let
it be your Care to employ it more wisely.

Did you not wish, over and over, that
Heaven and the Happiness thereof had
been your chief Care ? Why then, make
Amends for former Neglects, by your
future Diligence in the Work of your
Salvation.

Could you not have been content to
give all the World, if it had been yours,
for a little Space to consider better, and
to make your Peace with God ? Now a
longer Space is granted you, forget not
how valuable you thought it, but make
it a real Blessing to you, by improving it
to the Ends, for which you so earnestly
wished and prayed for it.

Did you not make repeated Promises
and

and Resolutions, that if it should please God to prolong your Life, you would live to him, and serve him Faithfully and Sincerely all your Days? You see, God hath granted what you desired, and now he expects that you perform what you promised: He vouchsafes you longer Life, to prove whether your Resolutions were sincere and in Earnest; and if you forget them, you provoke him either to bring upon you some heavier Judgment, to try how far that will work; or (which is far more terrible) to give you up to final Destruction, when he sees that neither his Judgments can awaken you, nor your own Promises and Resolutions bind you. *When thou vowest a Vow unto God* (saith the wise Man, (*Eccl. v. 4.*) *defer not to pay it.* Every Promise and Resolution you made in your Sickness, was in the Nature of a solemn Vow to God; and the Sincerity of that Vow depends not so much upon your Intentions while you were sick, as upon your Performances now you are well. If you had died, none but God could have judged of your Sincerity: But now you live, if you forget your Vow, this will be a plain and open Declaration that it was only the Effects of the Fears and Terrors

of Death ; it will show, that you have profited nothing by the Chastisements of your Heavenly Father, but are one of those perverse and untractable Children, who will be no longer good than they see the Rod hanging over them. But I am persuaded better Things of you, and do heartily hope that your late Promises and Resolutions are fresh in your Memory, and that you are making haste to ease your Mind of whatever Burden you found upon it, in the Time of your Sickness ; that is, in few Words, that you are now doing, whatever you then wished had been done.

VI. Particularly, If your Conscience did then charge you with any Act of Injustice, delay not to make Restitution to the utmost of your Power : If your Sickness found you in a State of Enmity with any Person, do your Part towards a speedy Reconciliation ; If you had not then settled your worldly Concerns, defer not to settle them now in such Manner as may best preserve Peace among those you leave behind, whenever it shall please God to take you away : If you found great Comfort of Mind, in being joined by the Minister and other good Christians, in Prayer to God ; now you are released from your
Con-

Confinement, seek and enjoy the same Comfort in a serious and diligent Attendance on the Worship of the Church: If in that weak Condition of Body and Mind, you desired to be Partaker of the Blessed Sacrament, and found yourself grieved that you had not frequented it more in the Time of your Health; you see, it hath pleased God to restore your Health, and therewith an Ability of considering and preparing yourself; fail not therefore to come frequently to the Lord's Table, during the Remainder of your Life. In short, recollect diligently, what were the Sins, Failings and Neglects, that you then found yourself most sensibly grieved and concerned at, and let it be your first and immediate Care to set these right; assuring yourself, that the Condition of your Soul is really such as you saw it in the Time of your Sickness, and esteeming it the greatest Blessing of your Recovery, that it gives you Time and Opportunity to clear the Guilt of your former Life, and to prepare for your future Account, by a speedy Course of Repentance and Amendment.

VII. There are many Things concur, in the Time of Sickness, to raise good Resolutions in the Hearts of Men; as
the

the Thoughts of present Death, the immediate Prospect of a future State, and an Unfitness of Body and Mind to attend the Cares, or relish the Pleasures of this World. But when Health returns, these Motives to Seriousness do not only cease, but are succeeded by Motives to Luke-warmness and Forgetfulness; as, the Hopes of long Life, the Distance of a future Account, and a Delight in the Business and Entertainments of the World. It is therefore necessary, now you are restored to Health, to be warned of these Temptations, in order to be prepared against them; considering yourself not as Discharged, but only Reprieved from Death; and that as God granted the Reprieve, so none but God can tell how long or short it is to be: That the Preparation for your future Account is not the Work of a dying Bed, but the Business of your whole Life; and the more of Life is spent, the more diligently are you concerned to attend this Work. That as God sent Sickness, to turn your Thoughts upon your Spiritual State, and to shew you the many Imperfections in it; so he has given you Health, that you may have Space and Opportunity to supply

supply and amend these Imperfections; That God, who is training you up for a future State, cannot be supposed to have prolonged your Life, only that you may have the Pleasure to eat and drink so many Days, and sleep so many Nights longer in this World; but as in all his other Dispensations, so particularly in these of Sickness and Health, his great Design is, to engage us in a diligent Pursuit of our future Happiness; by Sickness to moderate our Desires after this World, and mind us of our Condition in the next; and by Health, to give us the Opportunity of approving ourselves to Him, and preparing us for Heaven, by a steadfast Course of Obedience and Devotion.

VIII. Take therefore this merciful Warning that God has given you, and improve it diligently to the Purposes intended; remembering that it will be a proportionable Aggravation of your Guilt, if you resist these gracious Endeavours for the Salvation of your Soul, and give no Proofs of your growing better under his Hand. Consider also, that this may possibly be the last Warning, with Time for Repentance and Amendment, that he will give, and that your next Sickness may

may end in Death, or (which is worse) Death may seize you on a sudden, without any Warning at all. And if you now despise his Chastening, and thereby provoke him to give you up to sudden Destruction (as nothing is more like to provoke him to it) you will have nothing to blame but your own Perverseness, in not complying with the Methods which he had taken for your Salvation.

Do not then trifle with God; but while he gives you Opportunity, be wise unto Salvation. He has been administering Sickness in the Nature of a Remedy to your Soul, and now that is over, he is waiting to see what good Effects it has had; what Changes it has wrought in the Thoughts and Resolutions of your Heart; how much it has taken off your Mind from the Delights of this World, and turned your Desires upon Heaven and the Things of the next Life; how much more serious and careful of your Ways you will be for the Time to come, than you have hitherto been; how heartily you will set yourself on one hand, to root out all evil Habits, and, on the other hand, to attain the Christian Graces and Virtues which are wanting in you.

In

In short, God has in great Mercy given you new Life, and he is now waiting to see whether you will become a new Man.

And while he is thus Waiting for *You*, how can you forget and neglect *Him*? Is God so greatly concerned for you, and will you have no Concern for yourself? When you see him thus labouring, both in the Way of Mercy and Judgment, for the Salvation of your Soul, how can you resist so much Goodness? how dare you provoke so much Power? You have already been under the Hand of God in your late Sickness, and what you have hitherto felt has been the Chastisement of a tender Father; and if you will be wise, it may be improved into the greatest Blessing he could have sent; but if you will not listen to his Correction, you do in effect defy him, and cast him off, and you may find the next Return of his Hand, to be changed from the Chastisement of a tender Father into the Vengeance of an angry G o d.

IX. I write not this, as if I thought you had forgot your late Sickness, or had been Chastised and Visited in vain; but being sincerely desirous of your Spiritual Welfare, I omit no Argument, either of
Love

18 *Serious Advice to a Person, &c.*

Love or Fear, Mercy or Judgment, that may help to cherish and keep alive the good Thoughts and Resolutions which your late Sickness hath raised in you. These, for ought you can yet tell, were only the Effects of the Fears and Terrors you were under, and now is the Time to make it appear, that you meant them in earnest, and that they are your settled Choice and Judgment; which, I hope, is what you have not only resolved to do, but what you are now doing, in a just Sense of the Uncertainty of Life, and of the Happiness of being always in a Preparation for Death. And that God will be pleased to give you Grace and Strength to persevere in your good Resolutions, and to continue stedfast in the Way that leads to Eternal Life, is the hearty Prayer of

Your Affectionate Brother

and PASTOR.

A THANKSGIVING *after*
Recovery from SICKNESS.

MOST Gracious and Merciful God, to whom alone belong the Issues of Life and Death; I thy unworthy Servant, who have been under thine afflicting Hand, and am raised again from the Bed of Sicknes, do here present myself before Thee in a thankful Sense of thy great Mercy and Goodness towards me. Thou hast chast'ned and corrected me, but thou hast not given me over unto Death. Thou hast saved my Life from Destruction, and crowned me with Mercy and Loving-kindness. Blessed be thy Holy Name for supporting me under the Pain and

Anguish

20 *A Thanksgiving after*

Anguish of my Sick-Bed, for the
seasonable Supplies of Patience
and Comfort, which thou didst
graciously afford me, and for Re-
storing me in
thy good Time
to the Blessings
of Health and
Strength *.

** When any Person, during the
Time of Sickneſs, hath been Light-
headed, he or ſhe may add, [and
to the perfect Uſe of my Rea-
ſon and Underſtanding.]*

But I know, O Lord, that the
Pain and Weakneſs wherewith
thou haſt viſited me, were not
for the Punishment of my Body,
but for the Improvement of my
Soul; to let me ſee the Frailty
of my Nature, and the Uncer-
tainty of my Life; to wean me
from the Delights of this World,
and to engage me in a ſerious
Preparation for the next: In all
which I thankfully acknowledge
thy fatherly Care over me, and
that

that thou of very Faithfulness
hast caused me to be afflicted.

I adore the Riches of thy Goodness, in giving me a right Knowledge of Thee and thy Ways in these thy Dispensations to me, and in making them the happy Means to bring me to a Sense of the Evil of my Doings, and to a serious Consideration of my future State. Before I was afflicted, I went astray ; I forgot my Duty to Thee, and followed the Imaginations of my own Heart ; my Thoughts were taken up with the Business and Entertainments of this World, and the Care of my Soul was neglected and forgotten. But thy Chastisements have brought me back into the right Way ; and now, to my unspeakable Comfort and Happiness, my Affections

fections are placed upon the Things Above, and the Things that concern my everlasting Salvation. To thee, therefore, O my God, who hast not cut me off in the midst of my Sins, but hast in great Mercy given me Space for Repentance and Amendment; to thee will I live, in Holiness and Righteousness all my Days; forsaking every evil Way, and studying above all Things to do that which is well-pleasing in thy Sight. I am heartily grieved at the Sins and Vanities of my former Life, and do here solemnly renounce them all; more especially those which I have been hitherto most guilty of, and to which my own corrupt Inclinations, or the Snares and Temptations of the World, are most
like

like to betray me for the Time
come *. And, in
a Sense of my
own Weaknefs and

** Here confefs the Sins you
have been moſt guilty of, and
againſt which you do there-
fore particularly Reſolve.*

Frailty, I earneſtly implore the
Aſſiſtance of thy Holy Spirit, to
ſubdue my inordinate Deſires, and
break the Power of all evil Ha-
bits, and to keep me ſtedfaſt in
every Promise and Reſolution that
I made before Thee, in the Day
of my Diſtreſs : All which I do
now, in thy Preſence moſt ſincere-
ly and heartily Renew. And I be-
ſeech Thee, let me never be drawn
to forget or neglect them, either
by the Cares and Pleaſures of this
World, or by the Hopes of a
long Continuance in it ; but
give me Grace always to make
Eternity my chief Care and Con-
cern ; and let thy late gracious
Warning

Warning of Mortality teach me the Uncertainty of my Abode upon Earth, and oblige me to live in a daily Preparation to die. That so having duly profited by thy Fatherly Chastisement, and employing the Remainder of my Days to thy Glory, and the Salvation of my own Soul, I may be found watching, whenever my appointed Time shall come, and may change this frail State of Mortality for an Immortal Crown of Glory. All which I humbly beg of Thee, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer.

Amen.

F I N I S.

